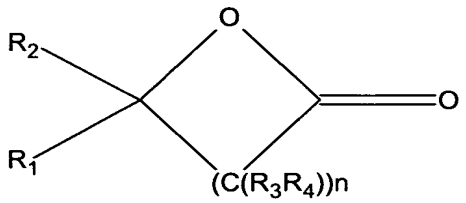
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A process for the preparation of an alkyl alkenoate, wherein a lactone of the general molecular formula



wherein n is 1, 2 or 3, R_1 is a C_1-C_4 alkyl group, and R_2, R_3 and R_4 are, independently, a H atom or a C_1-C_4 alkyl group,

is reacted with a C_1-C_4 alkyl alcohol in a liquid phase in the presence of a strong acid catalyst at transesterification conditions to form the alkyl alkenoate, wherein alkyl alkenoate and alcohol are continuously removed from the liquid phase by distillation.

2. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein R_1 is an ethyl or a methyl group~~, preferably a methyl group~~.

3. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein R_2 is a hydrogen atom.

4. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein both R_3 and R_4 are a hydrogen atom.

5. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein n is 2.

6. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the lactone is gamma valerolactone and the alkyl alkenoate is alkyl pentenoate.

7. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the lactone-to-alcohol molar ratio in the liquid phase is at least 3~~, preferably at least 5, more preferably at least 10~~.

8. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature in the range of from 100 to 300 °C~~, preferably of from 150 to 250 °C~~.

9. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the pressure in the reaction zone is in the range of from 0.01 to 10 bar (absolute)~~, preferably of from 0.1 to 5 bar (absolute), more preferably ambient pressure~~.

10. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the alkyl alcohol is methanol or ethanol~~, preferably methanol~~.

11. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the catalyst is a strong liquid acid~~, preferably sulphuric acid or p-toluene sulphonic acid~~.

12. (Currently amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1, wherein the catalyst is a strongly acidic solid~~, preferably an ion-exchange resin or acidic ZSM-5 or beta zeolite~~.

13. (New) A process according to claim 1, wherein R_1 is a methyl group.

14. (New) A process according to claim 2, wherein R_2 is a hydrogen atom.

15. (New) A process according to claim 2, wherein both R_3 and R_4 are a hydrogen atom.

16. (New) A process according to claim 3, wherein both R_3 and R_4 are a hydrogen atom.

17. (New) A process according to claim 2, wherein n is 2.

18. (New) A process according to claim 3, wherein n is 2.

19. (New) A process according to claim 4, wherein n is 2.

20. (New) A process according to claim 2, wherein the lactone is gamma valerolactone and the alkyl alkenoate is alkyl pentenoate.